

Letter from the Editor

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This Letter from the Editor introduces the first issue from the new publisher, Cleveland State University School of Social Work. The editor stresses continuity from the previous publisher, California State University Long Beach School of Social Work; appeals for contributions of narratives and funds; announces the growing editorial team; discusses the way in which the journal's peer reviewed narratives enrich practice, theory, and research; shares perspectives on the nature of narratives published in the journal, and discusses the value of process recordings and field education as sources of Reflections narratives.

Since its founding in 1995, *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping* has had a distinctive appearance and distinguished content. One goal of this first issue from Cleveland State University School of Social Work is continuity of appearance and content. A concerted effort has and will be made to evoke the memory of the journal founded by Sonia Leib Abels at California State University Long Beach (CSULB) School of Social Work.

Illustrative of this commitment, this issue's cover is re-published from the last print issue of *Reflections*, published in Winter 2012. The graphics were based on the legacy left by John Feijoo, University Print Shop, California State University Long Beach. The artwork was created by Robin Richesson, M.F.A., Professor of Art at CSULB, who has agreed to continue to serve as Art Director. The cover saying, "It did not start with me, it will not end with me," is adapted from Misty L. Wall's narrative in the last printed issue (Wall, 2012), and is republished here in the Special Issue for which it was originally intended. This issue contains narratives submitted both before and after we became publisher. It is back dated to Spring 2012. This is a standard practice for journals and will continue until our issues are back on schedule.

Reflections has had several editors in its first 18 volumes: Sonia Leib Abels, the late Jillian Jimenez, Eileen Pasztor and now myself. The journal was also long nurtured by Wendi McLendon-Covey, former Assistant Editor of *Reflections*. Here's hoping that others will serve in the editorial

leadership of *Reflections* over the next 18 volumes. During my editorship, the content will respect the tradition which *Reflections* editors, reviewers, authors, and readers have long appreciated.

The appearance is also similar, but the columns are wider, we use open source Liberation Fonts, and we have laid out the journal using open source Scribus software. The journal is published using open source Open Journal Systems (OJS) software from the Public Knowledge Project.

Ensuring the Publication of *Reflections*

However, unlike most OJS journals, *Reflections* is not an open access journal. Registration of all readers is required. Individual subscriptions of \$18 a volume will commence with Volume 19, although they will apply only in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and the Eurozone. Library subscriptions are \$100 per volume. Over 40 libraries have already subscribed, many for the first time, now that IP-range access is available university-wide. Individuals, social agencies, schools of social work, and other academic units can also become Friends of *Reflections* and receive an annual or permanent username and password. For more information, please visit www.csuohio.edu/class/reflections or www.reflectionsnarrativesofprofessionalhelping.org. Please consider becoming a subscriber or a Friend of *Reflections*. Please also consider arranging for your academic program or social agency to become an Institutional Friend of *Reflections* or asking your university or community library to subscribe.

After all, one lesson from the near loss of this beloved journal – following the 2012 announcement that *Reflections* would cease publication – is that *Reflections* needs a sound fiscal foundation that protects it from public university budget cuts. Another lesson is that while one university or school of social work may publish *Reflections*, the journal is ultimately the province of those for whom *Reflections* occupies a special place in our hearts. The future of *Reflections* depends on the continued support of past readers, authors and reviewers and on the involvement of other practitioners and scholars from social work and other helping professions, in the U.S. and internationally.

Growing Editorial Team

The inside cover page shows that the *Reflections* editorial team is already growing beyond our university. In addition to Robin Richesson serving as Art Director, Denice Goodrich Liley will serve as the first Associate Editor for Field Education. She will oversee an ongoing Special Section on Field Education, with articles appearing in most issues.

Also, as announced earlier during the journal's transition, members of the previous Editorial Board were invited to serve as reviewers for *Reflections*, as were the nearly 500 surviving authors we were able to contact. Nearly 100 persons stepped forward to offer to serve as reviewers, and 50 persons have already completed a review. For each volume, the reviewers who have been most active in that volume and cumulatively will be listed on the inside cover page as serving on the Narrative Review Board.

By Volume 20, we will constitute a Policy Advisory Board, made up of persons who have contributed to and are devoted to *Reflections*. In my view, peer-reviewed journals require a mechanism for advice to the publisher on succession of editorial leadership and renewal of editorial policy. In addition, there must be accountability of the editor to the publisher for budgeting and publishing matters, editor autonomy for strictly editorial decision, affirmative efforts to ensure diversity at all levels, continued attention to international content, and concerted action to achieve enhanced interdisciplinarity. My editorship will reflect those views.

From Special Issues to Special Sections

Special Sections will replace Special Issues,

beginning with Spring 2012. Such special collections of articles are selected by the section editor(s) following peer review by both a regular *Reflections* reviewer and one among several special reviewers chosen by the guest editors. One advantage of Special Sections is flexibility of length. Depending on the quality and quantity of submissions, they can be shorter or longer than the wonderful Special Issues of the past, given our new online format. Another advantage is that Special Section guest editors are freed from concerns about filling an entire issue. Special Section Calls for Narratives will contain submission deadlines, but because there will not be a hard and fast issue deadline, there is more flexibility in making editorial decisions, such as accept with required and/or suggested revisions or revise and re-submit. Finally, this policy ensures that all issues beginning with Spring 2012 contain general submissions, in addition to any special section, thus reducing delays in publishing such articles. Inquiries to the Editor about Special Sections are welcome. Please see Special Section policies on the CSU website.

***Reflections* is a Peer-Reviewed Academic Journal**

Reflections narratives are valuable for education for practice but also often contribute to theory and research. With respect to theory, our narratives often make important conceptual contributions to the literature. They do this by reflecting upon narrative content, drawing on relevant literature, and addressing unresolved theoretical problems. The Review Guidelines ask reviewers to provide feedback about whether the article draws or might draw “conceptual or theoretical conclusions about the nature of professional practice in the helping professions.” Not all *Reflections* articles include or need to include citations from the literature. Not all narratives contain reflections which engage practice or social theory. Some of the best do not do so but still contain reflections of intrinsic value.

Reflections narratives are also an important source of empirical knowledge about the nature of practice in the helping professions. *Reflections* doesn't publish formal research results or reviews of the literature. However, *Reflections* articles contain narrative content conveying interpersonal interactions, witnessed events, and felt experiences. This narrative content is placed within the context of a well-told story that helps readers discover new

ways of thinking about the personal, the professional and the political in our lives. Reviewers are asked whether they would encourage authors “to draw conclusions about the need for qualitative or quantitative research related to the issues arising from the narrative.”

In the next issue, the Letter from the Editor will provide further confirmation that *Reflections* is a double-blind peer-reviewed academic journal, discuss the indexing services and databases in which content will appear (please see the inside cover), and announce plans to re-publish all back issues.

***Reflections* is a Journal of Narratives**

Sonia and Paul Abels pointed out (Abels & Abels, 2012, p. 6), “Different from other scholarly journals, [*Reflections*] sought to publish professional narratives of practice. The authors were asked not only to tell the story of how they dealt with the services they offered, but how they were personally impacted as the helping process evolved.” Since that time, *Reflections* benefitted from dialogue with with dozens of authors and reviewers about how to build upon that original vision.

Reflections publishes narratives of interpersonal practice, community practice, macro practice, and what Friend of *Reflections* Alex Gitterman calls teaching practice. We also publish narratives of activism for social justice, the subject of a Special Issue – edited by Paul and Sonia Abels – to which Charles Garvin (also a Friend of *Reflections*) contributed (Garvin, 2010).

Over the years, I have arrived at a personal perspective on narratives which I would like to share. Prior to serving as editor, I contributed two narratives (Dover, 2009; 2010). In addition, I edited the Spring 2010 Special Issue on Work and the Workplace and co-edited the Spring 2000 Special Issue on Responding to War: Social Workers and War in the Balkans. As I see it, one of the many ways to write a *Reflections* narrative is to begin with a distinct moment of interaction, shown via narrative content that is conveyed in a vignette. One or more vignettes are then placed within the context of an engaging story (exposition). That story produces reflections which are shared with the reader. Showing, telling, and reflecting are three elements which enrich *Reflections* narratives. For

the helping professions, such narratives add knowledge, enrich theory, and inspire research; often, they also produce tears and laughter. Please consider writing a narrative, in a style which makes sense to you, and submitting it to *Reflections*. If you would like initial feedback, even on an early idea for a narrative, email me at reflections@csuohio.edu or call (216)687-3564. Having an accessible editor is another part of the *Reflections* tradition.

Special Acknowledgements

The co-editors of this Field Education issue and the upcoming Mentoring issue extended their commitment by seeking additional articles. The faculty of Cleveland State University School of Social Work and other Cleveland-based *Reflections* authors and reviewers have played an essential role in bringing *Reflections* to our School. Several hundred *Reflections* authors agreed that we could re-publish their narratives. Subsequently, Cleveland State University entered into an agreement with California State University which now authorizes us to scan and re-publish all back issues. Dozens of authors contributed to a booklet of memories which was shared with Sonia Leib Abels, a former Cleveland State University faculty member, at a reception held in Cleveland in Fall 2012.

During the 2012-2013 academic year, *Reflections* benefitted from the thoughtful contributions of the late Josh Canary, M.S.W., our graduate assistant. Josh's thoughtful piece, “Show and Tell: Narrative and Exposition in *Reflections*,” available now as a link from our Review Guidelines, has proven helpful to authors and reviewers alike. It will be published our forthcoming *Many Ways of Narrative* series, which will publish narratives on the writing of *Reflections* narratives.

The name of the series is inspired by the seminal editorial essay in *Social Work* by *Reflections* author Ann Hartman (Hartman, 1990). In some ways, this series began with Benjamin Shepard's piece in Winter 2012 (Shepard, 2012). Additional contributions are sought.

I am personally grateful to Alex Gitterman and Charles Garvin, with whom I studied at Columbia and Michigan, for their advice and support during this transition. I am also indebted to Eileen Pasztor and to Sonia and Paul Abels, who have been

frequent sources of feedback and affirmation. This journal would not be publishing were it not for the support of our School's former Director Murali Nair and former Interim Director and two-time *Reflections* author Lonnie Helton, now both retired. The Dean of our College, Gregory Sadlek, our Library Director, Glenda Thornton, our Social Work Librarian, Fran Mentch, and the administration and support staff of Cleveland State University have provided much appreciated fiscal support, procedural advice and operational facilitation. Special thanks also goes to our 2012-2013 work-study students, Kaitlyn Probst and Taylor Garten.

Field Education and *Reflections* Narratives

This is a Special Issue on Field Education. For most helping professionals, field education is where we really begin to learn about ourselves in relation to helping and being helped. That was certainly the case for me as a student at Adelphi and Columbia in the late 1970s. In those days, all students were required to regularly write process recordings. These were accounts written in as verbatim: a manner as is possible about the verbal and nonverbal interactions of work with clients and in organizations and communities. Process recordings often informed practice papers that also drew on the literature about social work practice.

Process recordings continue to be used, although less frequently, in field education. Audio and video recordings are also used to permit retrospective reflection on practice and to examine practice decisions (which I define as something said or not said, done or not done in working with a client system). As the late Irving Miller pointed out in his classroom, "Every little practice decision is affected by the organizational context." Accordingly, it is valuable to try to understand and write about how our interactions are at one and the same time both socially structured and socially constructed in ways that are not at first apparent. Having an ongoing section on Field Education, overseen by an Associate Editor for Field Education, is consistent with seeing field education as the signature pedagogy of social work education (Larrison & Korr, 2013; Boitel & Fromm forthcoming). The section will publish articles by social work students in their field practicum, students in psychology internship programs, speech pathologists in their clinical fellowship year, and narratives from

supervisors, field seminar instructors, field advisors, and field directors.

There is perhaps no better starting point for a *Reflections* narrative than the learning process of students in the helping professions. In fact, Jennifer Bellamy, co-editor of the upcoming Special Issue on Mentoring in the Helping Professions, has suggested that students be assigned to draw on process recordings and other accounts of practice, and to write narratives according to the guidelines of this journal. Might an appropriately disguised account of practice which honestly and fearlessly reflects upon learning and teaching in the practice of social work (Reynolds, 1943), written according to this journal's guidelines as a potential *Reflections* submission, consolidate key practice behaviors and help achieve the requisite competencies of a helping profession? I will leave you with that question as you proceed to enjoy the present issue.

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